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ABSTRACT

Contextualizing reality is the final goal of academic pursuit, and in college level language studies, a key goal should always be to make students aware of what they already know. The words used by humans are either organizational, functional words, or they are related to cultural literacy. Cultural literacy is a body of knowledge that all people share. Rhetoric can be studied from a classical orientation in order to demonstrate its applications for citizens today. A composition pattern can be used to format the logic of discourse and for critiquing virtually any type of oratory or written essay. A composition pattern makes students aware of what they already know. Moving from rhetoric to discourse, students shudder to think of grammar and parts of speech, but instructors can help them to understand the function of word types. By focusing on function words, or words that can not be drawn and which are used to organize and signify relationships, students can sometimes discover unclear statements. A color-coded word game played like Scrabble, in which students try to string words together into sentences, has also proven effective for creativity. By making students aware of their own language usage, they are helped to appreciate the linguistic miracle which is the hallmark of the human species. (An outline headed "How to Edit for Composition Pattern"; a list of function words; and a table headed "College Reading and Writing: The Composition Pattern" are appended.) (HB)

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Jack Urowitz and Eva Bozzato

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TODAY'S STUDENT IS TOMORROW'S CITIZEN

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"A rhetorical dissertation of a much more entertaining conference on the topic "

Multiple choice question:

Michelangelo is most well known today as

a) Great Renaissance Painter
b) Great Renaissance Sculptor
c) Religious Idealogue
d) Irascible Ninja Turtle

There is no meaning without context, and there is no greater work of imagination than contextualizing reality. This process is the end of academic pursuits. We must secure productive social backdrops for personal enterprise and satisfaction. Every human being is a genius of language. Our pedagogy is driven by the precept that in college level language studies the best we can do is to make students conscious of what they already know and do.

Grammar studies have become the arcana of the linguistic elite. Rhetoric has a pejorative connotation today and Cultural Literacy seems more like a study of anthropology than of language studies. But, everybody wants to improve their ability to communicate and to be understood. That is the premise of our hopes for success.

The three interrelated communication skills are: the quest for cultural understanding; the means to organize communication; and the structural insights necessary to make meaning of our perception.

Grammatical words relate to the organization of thought, rhetorical words relate to the organization of communication, there are less than a hundred of these words in the English language used today. All the rest of the words that we know and deal with every day, that fill the dictionary, comprise our cultural literacy. We will examine these in generic, general education and vocational terms.

The generic use of grammar is the innate organization of language. Grammar grows out of the same mind dynamism that organizes perception into context to give it meaning. The general education component of grammar is a humanistic study of social preferences.

Classical Rhetoric, the grammar of ideas, is another skill born of the same mind dynamism, but in this more societal function it is the organizer of thought for communication. The modern vocational use of rhetoric is the production of business reports, technical reports, essays or any other types of vocational communication.

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Cultural literacy is the content of grammar and rhetoric. Where grammar is the blending and cooking, and rhetoric is the organization of the menu, cultural literacy is the food that makes up the meal of language communication. Its generic implications are basic utilitarian word use. The general education component of cultural literacy is the study of the currency of citizenship. And finally, in the vocational component of cultural literacy, each one of our students encounters a vocational lexicon which they must master for graduation.

Cultural Literacy is a body of knowledge that we all share. Every group has its own cultural literacy patterns and words, those derived from coteries of families, friends, committees, colleges... It initiates the individual into a group and consolidates social identity.

Professions have specialized terms and college programs focus on initiating students into the culture of their chosen career by acquainting them with the necessary vocational vocabulary. On the other hand the cultural literacy of the prepared citizen isn't specialized but rather allows average citizens to grasp the meaning of any general level oral or written discourse. Students or other initiates into a nation or culture must learn not only the language but also the shared associations of that culture's vocabulary in order to communicate. And this has important implications for teaching because a large part of that initiation takes place in school. In E.B. Hirsch Jr.'s book Cultural Literacy, he wrote:

> Every text, even the most elementary, implies information that it takes for granted and doesn't explain. Knowing such information is the decisive skill in reading.

He then goes on to illustrate this by citing studies on children's abilities and concluded that older children are better readers, not because they have had practice reading, but because they know more words. This makes everybody a social anthropologist.

So writers and speakers, including popular entertainers, assume that their audience shares with them a body of knowledge or associations beyond basic English. For example, Billy Joel has written a song "We Didn't Start The Fire" the lyrics of which are an education in the headlines covering forty years as well as a testimony to the value of sharing cultural literacy.

As an introduction to cultural literacy we played a tape of the song in class along with copies of the lyrics, a list of 120 terms and names. Knowing 100% of the words was not the point. Rather we used them as an example of the kinds of associations that blossom and overlap. And if you don't know the meaning of them, then you can miss entire sections of conversations and anything written.

Billy Joel's list conveniently arises from pop music that most of our students (circa 1992) have heard, liked, but to which they have little historical recourse. Hirsch's book also contains an exhaustive cultural literacy list of enduring terms from Ancient Greece to modern scientific and popular terms that he thinks everyone should know. Since cultural literacy depends on where you are, these lists should be customized for each class. Some of our colleagues came up with a Canadian cultural literacy list.

Grammar and rhetoric are more obviously innate, but cultural literacy, the idea to absorb what's around so you can better relate to people and have a contextual understanding of reality, is also automatic. Everyone acculturates to their milieu.

As you can see on The Composition Pattern (see appendix), we study rhetoric from a classical orientation while demonstrating its applications for citizens today. Incorporating the names used in classical rhetoric studies in the Greek, simultaneously enriches their cultural literacy while introducing them to the logical formatting of discourse. In rhetoric itself as it was defined, there are three kinds of oratory for language arrangement. The one we use most often is deliberative, where the writer tries to establish some kind of thesis. The other two kinds of rhetoric are forensic rhetoric, the language of the court room, and epideictic oratory, the language of the ceremony, a wedding for instance.

One need not use all the different sections of the composition pattern in every type of oratory or written essay. Originally, these were written as the structures of a speech because oratory was the currency of public communication in ancient Greece. However, in the neo-classical era, these structures were utilized for writing, as books were much more prevalent because of the printing press. Whatever the case, you won't always use all parts of this language structure. For instance, the confutatio is often not appropriate in epideictic speeches. In a presidential nomination speech, one would not include unkind references, such as, "Some say he should have known about Iran-Contra, but I say no, he was too busy arranging the conquering of Granada and Panama". You would just leave that section out of that kind of speech.

We point out to our students that this is the generic structure of communication and that there are more specialized ones. Some of them are relatively new, such as the business report, that is, new in the spectrum of civilization. And some of them are as anthropomorphic as a conversation you might have with a friend. In normal discourse when you want to communicate something, you don't just start right off, you ingratiate yourself first. Then you follow a rhetorical pattern determined by your purpose and your friend's responses. This essay is similarly delineated. The Composition Pattern makes students conscious of what they already know. It's not unlike learning any kind of artistic skill, some

kids can draw really well, they can reproduce a figure. But when they go to a school and they sit as an apprentice, only then do they become conscious of what they are doing and ready to improve upon it. We don't give this to them blindly, we have an exercise called How to Edit for Rhetoric (see appendix) which they use to edit the first draft of their first writing assignment, an outpouring of ideas about a personal topic.

Once they have their thoughts on the page, we ask them to rearrange them into the composition pattern by responding to the questions on this exercise sheet. This helps them see their ideas in something similar to a chart format. Through these questions we elicit the various sections of the composition pattern. This is often the first time many students have edited by design.

It doesn't occur to students that personal writing is as structured as a formal report or essay. We try to get them into their own rhetorical literacy first and then move them forward into a business report, letter or essay so that they can recognize and edit for structure with a deeper cognizance of rhetorical possibilities. Drawing analogies to their personal experience as it is written down provides them with the confidence of working with the familiar.

Now we move from rhetoric to the most innate of all innate skills...grammar!

Grammar is a dirty word in the college classroom. And yet one does not even have to know the parts of speech in order to be able to communicate grammatically. We all know the words that signify grammatical coherence (see list of function words enclosed); the average citizen/student knows a greater percentage of the 'grammatical lexicon' than of any other lexicon that a college education will introduce. And, the grammatical lexicon will change less in a citizen's lifetime than will the professional or cultural literacy lexicons that everyone must keep on top of to be relevant. Since all our college's students can communicate grammatically, our thesis of making the student cognizant of what is innate, is best served by a concentration on the 'words' of grammar.

Words are where meaning starts. The best grammar book in the world is a dictionary because every grammatical structure begins with a function word, what are often called conjunctions and prepositions. Words are where everything human begins and ends, and what is special about grammar words, those words that signify a grammatical sequence, is that they are relics of the way we perceive the world.

Our students don't recognize is that language is something more than just the water that they swim in. They use it as a currency but they don't have much faith that they can comprehend how the monetary system works, that they can understand the semiotics of

their language. The operative metaphor used in our classrooms is if you were a coach of a hockey team, it would be a good thing not to put six goalies on the ice. It is necessary to know which player plays which position. Words should follow similar scrutiny.

Words are representations of existence in human terms, either in sounds out of the throat or etchings on a piece of paper. You are either a growling or a catatonic thing. We manipulate the communication of language by key words and their contexts. Many students know the definition of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, but they can't consciously use that information to help them formulate their discourse. We try to help them with that by emphasizing words one at a time. The first thing to make them realise is that there are not only four parts of speech that represent a world in human terms, but there is fifth part of speech, that weird one, Function Words (see appendix) that synthesize the others into meaning. To show you how different that one is, we have a short 'found' poetry reading we use in class: we ask our students to create mental pictures for the following words which we read aloud.

Nouns	Verbs	Nouns/Adj.
axe	quake	blood stain
candle	choke	yellow air
cemetery	stomp	moist rats
skeleton	mutilate	silver fog
chain	cringe	foul darkness
talon	mangle	goblin screams

Verb/Adv.	Function Words
grossly bleed	when
fearfully slither	that
darkly pulse	because
weakly gasp	and
miserably die	or
rudely menace	through

When we get to the function words at the end of the list, their difficulty in creating mental images makes them see the uniqueness of grammatical words. Unlike the other parts of speech 'function words' do not represent anything from the outside world. They are only relics of perception, the grammatical signposts of language.

In the classroom, we ask students to take a 150-200 word sample, and go through it word by word. Whenever they find a word that would be impossible to draw, they look it up on the Function Word list. The assignment is to circle all the function words on their paper. Subsequently, when they look through their 150 word sample, they can use these circles for grammatical editing by looking for any coagulation of the circled words, the function words. More than

the average number of these circles usually indicates unclear sentences. When they sit in peer groups and read their papers aloud, their peers will no doubt concur that the coagulated parts need clarification. Removing some function words, making some new sentences, combining others clears up the confusion, often requiring the addition or alteration of content.

Students appreciated this kind of mechanical approach to grammar because it deals with numbers, it's visual, and it avoids the conventional lexicon of grammar. They like the kind of pragmatic evidence that this concrete analysis yields. Such a quantitative measurement also illuminates a global perspective on the integration of parts of speech in sentence formation.

To stimulate this new lexical awareness we used a colour coded word game which is played like Scrabble, but rather than letters building words, we have words on cards that the students build into sentences. The concept of the game was derived from computer generated quantitative measurements of language. Thank you Dr. Cluett, York University. The college versions of this game were created by the authors based on accessibility of grammatical constructions as found in popular literature; we quantitatively duplicated the grammatical constructions randomly selected from Harlequin Romance novels. The words that we included as a 'found' poetry reading were randomly selected from the game we created based on the horror movie theme which we call 'Things that Go Bump in the Night'. Regardless of the theme, it is advantageous to see the proportions of parts of speech on colour-coded game cards.

This is how the game is played. Student teams of about four each play against each other. We have three to four separate games going on in each class. They move the desks aside, they sit on the floor. It's a generally informal atmosphere. The first thing they do is mix these thousand words as thoroughly as possible. The proportions of the different parts of speech from the 1000 word Harlequin Romance sample suit the fictional writing that this exercise engenders. With randomness as an element, students can create ideas that they would never have thought of in their own sequential reasoning.

From the cultural literacy that they share, they all know how to play Scrabble so they don't have to be given too many directions on how to play this game. Each team gets 12 cards and they arrange those into a sentence. The only rule is that it has to make sense. It will have at least one white card (noun) and one yellow card (verb). And, because they are worth different points, students try to use as many of their high scoring cards as possible.

They lay down these sentences, Scrabble-style, and their game board grows organically. No two game boards are alike. The best examples that come out of their game play are subsequently used in creative writing exercises. They work on concepts of language that

they don't even know about such as, parallelism which becomes apparent in the colour order. Many times with v
verbs, students say, if we could just add an 'ing' or 'ed', it would make sense. If they can explain why it would make more sense, they have just given us a lesson on the definition and use of verbals. And we let them add verbals using stick-ons.

Grammar lessons come out in the best of ways, not a teacher lecturing but rather a teacher talking over the validity of word usage with students. In settling a dispute between two groups, we are appealing to the laws of grammar and the students will be sure to question our conclusions, and thereby, be made conscious of grammar and how it relates to their ability to understand. And it's a lot more fun for teachers too.

Randomness gives them permission to use unusual word combinations to create sentences that would not follow from their normal reasoning. This boosts their confidence in their imaginations and subsequently their writing. When their 'found sentences' are used collaboratively, they come up with some amazing stories. The exercise of creating something unusual, yet acceptable at the same time, is often a novel exercise for the average college student.

The four themes we've applied to the college version of this game are based on cultural literacy lexicons accessible to our students: they are' Things that Go Bump in the Night' based on horror movie lexicons; one based on food and cooking called 'A Moveable Feast'; one based on nature called 'Decameron'; and one with a romantic theme with a night club atmosphere called 'Moulin Rouge'. Once again, we try to prescribe the study of popular culture and cultural literacy into our language courses, since these are the stuff of meaning today.

So we see that the mind dynamism that serves comprehension and communication is manifest in the three areas discussed. By making students conscious of their own language usage we hope to help our students appreciate the linguistic miracle which is the hallmark of our species so that they can better utilize this genius in their college matriculation and in their full participation in society.

Because of today's rapidly changing social and professional demands we feel that language studies have never been more germane. Our goal for language studies is to reestablish the validity of grammar school basics while at the same time acculturating the student to the innovative forms of language and communication brought on by our high tech culture.

So that, when our students say the word Cowabanga, they care to spell it correctly and they are aware of the cultural icons that it suggests, be they renaissance painters or mutant turtles.

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Appendix

HOW TO EDIT FOR COMPOSITION PATTERN

So you've got your first draft. Now what? CALM DOWN! Follow these instructions, ask me (your teacher) for help when you need it.

OK, here are the directions: Forget about the order of your essay for now. If you do not have all the answers for the following steps, leave a blank space for them to be filled in later.

1. Copy the sentences or parts thereof that state the purpose behind your first draft.
2. Copy our -- one at a time -- the different statements that prove, or are examples of, your paper's main purpose as discovered in question #1.
3. Number the statements you found in question #2 by importance -- save the best for last.
4. Copy, or invent, an argument against your point of view -- and the rebuttal you would need to defend your view.
5. Copy the most stirring statement of your original draft. If you already included it in one of the above steps, take it for this step instead. If you don't have one, try to invent a humorous, provocative or compelling statement related to your point of view.
6. Read over your original draft to evaluate what you have not used. The, rescue or discard any statements that have not been included in the answers to the steps above. Include them in the list you created for step #3.
7. Give the heading Narratio to your answer for #1.
8. Give the heading Divisio to your answer for #3, except for the one you saved for last, the best one. Give this last one the heading Confirmatio.
9. Give the heading Confutatio to your answer for #4.
10. Give the heading Exordium to you answer for #5.

11. Add a Peroratio:
    by writing a conclusion that reaffirms your point of view;
    or
    by inventing, or restating your Exordium, as a humorous, provocative or compelling ending.
12. Complete this new draft by filling in any blank spaces you have left in the steps above. If you can't think of any ideas, consult with a classmate or your teacher.
13. Now you have a draft that is rhetorically sound, but it is not yet a composition. You must write up your statements into sentence and paragraph format. This will most likely require you to add a few sentences that will connect your ideas and give your composition continuity.

FUNCTION WORDS

The following words are not verbal representations of the outside world as are the other four parts of speech -- the nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The best way to judge whether or not your are dealing with a function word is to ask yourself if the greatest painter in the world could draw a picture of the word in question. If they could not, then 99.9% of the time you have found a function word. If you find any that are not on this list, please let me know. Mail additions to JACK UROWITZ, FALA, BRAMPTON.

Prepositions	Subordinators	Relative Pronouns	Sentence Connectors
about	after*	who+	
above	also	that	(can be used as
across	although	what	coordinators)
after*	anyway	whatever	
against	as	which+	accordingly
among	as if	whoever	anyway
at	because	whom+	besides
before*	before*	whomever	consequently
below	even though	whose	finally
beside	for*		furthermore
between	hence		hence
by	how	Coordinators	however
despite	however		indeed
down	if	along with#	likewise
during	just*	and	moreover
except	only	as well as	nevertheless
for*	since	but	nonetheless
from	so	for#	otherwise
in	so as	nor	overall
into	so far as	or	similarly
inside	so that	plus	still
just*	that	rather than#	therefore
like	then	so#	thus
of	though	whereas	whereby
off	till*	yet	
on	unless		
onto	until*		
out	what		
outside	when		
over	whenever		
through	where		
till*	whereas		
to	while		
under	why		
until*			
unto			
up	* -- can be used as a preposition or subordinator		
upon	+ -- also used as an interrogative pronoun		
with	# -- rare usage		
within			
without			

COLLEGE READING AND WRITING

THE COMPOSITION PATTERN

Jack Urowitz — Eva Bozzato

COMPOSITION STRUCTURE:	DEFINITION	METAPHOR (MEAL)	IN A SENTENCE
Exordium:	Verbal Handshake	Appetizer	My dear writing students,
Narratio:	Thesis/Purpose	Entree Presentation	if you want to communicate,
Divisio:	Arguments Cogently Arranged	Delving into Dishes: Eating the Meal	do it with awareness, eloquence, style and forethought
Confirmatio:	Final Argument or Summary of Arguments	The Last Bite	like every great speaker and writer has done before you;
Confutatio:	Opposing Argument(s) and Rebuttal	Feeling Stuffed: "Diet starts tomorrow!"	don't let emotion overpower your reason,
Peroratio:	Verbal Parting Handshake	Dessert	let reason empower your emotion.